

Agenda item 12
Closure of the session

Committee of Permanent
Representatives (CPR) to the
United Nations Human
Settlements Programme
(UN-Habitat)

Closing remarks by the
Executive Director

Thursday, 1 July 2021
UN Gigiri

Mr. Chairman

Members of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

Your Excellencies, Partners

Colleagues, Friends, Ladies and gentlemen

1.0 Let me take this opportunity to thank H.E. Mr. Chairman Ambassador Russom for his excellent chairing of this High-Level Mid-Term Review Meeting, convened by the Committee of Permanent Representatives, a universal membership meeting in the inter-sessional period of the UN-Habitat governance framework.

2.0 I have been informed by the Secretariat of Governing Bodies that the total number of participants from national governments is 271 representing 75 countries. This includes five ministers from Bahrain, Ethiopia (2), Kenya, Sudan and one deputy minister from Mexico. We had in attendance 53 ambassadors, 45 deputy permanent representatives and 167 national focal points including directors and technical advisors. The total of accredited partners is 44. Total number of participants is 315. I would also like to thank the 13 CPR Members who joined us physically here in this meeting room.

3.0 Please allow me to congratulate all of you for the successful convening of this inter-sessional meeting of the CPR. I appreciate your support including in developing the agenda, your flexibility with the hybrid format, modalities for negotiating an outcome document, and division of labor between Executive Board and the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

4.0 I have heard from Member States that the Strategic Plan is robust, relevant and provides a framework for helping cities and communities build back better. As you know, the Strategic Plan, grounded in the 2030 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, is designed to unlock the transformative role that urbanisation plays, in helping all of us to make the transition towards prosperity, peace and development.

5.0 As Member States have highlighted, UN-Habitat has been successful in developing a new way of working, that is focused on outcomes and impact demonstrated in regions, countries and cities. Over the past two days of deliberations, you have heard compelling evidence of the policy advisory and programmatic work, that are opening new opportunities, and responding to the hope of millions of people.

6.0 We appreciate all critical comments and guidance, helping us improve the way we deliver the Strategic Plan. We take note that Member States have highlighted shortfalls and limitations, brought about by inadequate funding. I thank Member States who have expressed their support for UN-Habitat, as we adapt our operational and normative work, to respond to the socio-economic impact of Covid-19. I hear Member States in their guidance, that we move away from being overly reactive, that we refocus and translate immediate challenges to long-term solutions. We will continue to be more nimble, innovative, and creative in financing the mandate, helping cities & communities respond effectively to the climate crisis, inequality, affordable housing and, in the process, help create jobs and improve livelihoods.

Your Excellencies,

7.0 I hear you that we need to improve the way we engage with Member States, particularly with regards to planning and preparations in the lead up to the CPR Mid-Term Review. We have had numerous bureau meetings, consulted widely through four regional group meetings, and carried out over ten bilateral meetings. We have also received detailed inquiries from Member States and presented these to the CPR Bureau. Nonetheless, as I have said to my team, we need to improve, and I call upon Member States to share with us their recommendations to help us improve the way we work, engage and support your meetings.

8.0 Let me assure all Member States that we have taken note of each and every one of your comments and suggestions. I welcome your substantive contributions, and stand ready to engage all of you from now until the next Executive Board Meeting not only to ensure we have consensus, but also to develop a work programme, that will accelerate the implementation of the second half of the Strategic Plan. Together, I believe we can create conditions, to support a sustainable transition to a world where poverty and inequality is reduced, risks minimized, and opportunities expanded.

9.0 The second half of the Strategic Plan provides a roadmap to move towards a cleaner, greener, safer, healthier, and happier future. I am extremely delighted to see that Member States fully embrace the idea, to work through three lenses that will give us more focus, capacity, efficiency, and relevance. This was further reinforced by thought leaders in the Dialogue on Cities and Pandemics, held during the second day of the Mid-Term Review, where we were urged to arrive at a new social contract, to be more inclusive, to invest in public institutions, and to plan as though the next pandemic is on the way. We must put women, youths, people with disabilities at the forefront of all our work.

10.0 To build a healthier, happier, and more sustainable future, I believe that the 3 lenses can guide our work across the strategic plan, namely: focus on new vulnerabilities, enhancement of the form and function of future cities, and support to inclusive socio-economic recovery.

11.0 We heed the guidance from Member States that we need to help prepare cities and communities, in terms of function and form when responding to new crisis, adapting to the future in terms of resilience and climate change. The design of sustainable ecological neighborhoods appears the best option and most functional unit to structure and scale-up city responses. Finally, we look forward to working with Member States in developing innovative and creative solutions to create conditions for long-term social and economic city recovery.

Your Excellencies

12.0 I have made it a key feature of my tenure as Executive Director to translate policy into practice, strategy into action, and action into positive impact on the lives of the people that we serve. In good faith, I have tried my best to implement the governance framework, carry out internal reforms, and strengthen multilateral action on the ground.

13.0 This is our first ever meeting of the intersessional body of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, demonstrating the ability of the CPR to undertake a mid-term review to guide the Secretariat, on the implementation of the remaining two years of the Strategic Plan.

14.0 Member States agreed to promote the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, to accelerate the Decade of Action and Paris Agreement, by strategically aligning the SG's Quadrennial Report, the urban dimension of the Regional Forums for Sustainable Development, the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda, and the 11th session of the World Urban Forum. We stand ready to support Member States, to advance the New Urban Agenda and welcome your further support.

15.0 We must generate funding to support the direction which you have now provided. Unearmarked funds, or funding which is softly earmarked to support implementation of the strategic plan, will be vital to carry out your decisions and the resolutions of the Assembly. With consistent and comprehensive financing as Member States have noted, we will be able to benefit from the integrated and catalytic nature of the Strategic Plan.

16.0 I would like to take the opportunity, to thank the Chair and the out-going bureau members, who guided us through the COVID-19 pandemic, and for successfully completing this first CPR meeting. I look forward to working with the in-coming Chair, the High Commissioner of Pakistan, and the in-coming bureau as we plan for the UN-Habitat Assembly.

17.0 Let me thank and acknowledge the inputs from non-governmental partners. Rest assured that we stand ready to work with you to ensure our work is inclusive and we welcome your critical inputs particularly through the SAGE and other channels. Let me also thank the support of local and regional governments, fellow mayors as we work together to localize the SDGs and ensure we reach the most vulnerable communities to ensure no one is left behind.

8.0 Let me close on a cheerful note. We have been able to conduct our business fairly well. We have kept the Programme moving forward despite the global pandemic. We have demonstrated the relevance of the United Nations. I am confident that with greater support, guidance and openness, we will be able to build back better, fairer and with greater equality. The power is in our hands. We must now act to help the people who depend on us, to ensure no one and no place is left behind in our urbanizing world.

Thank you. Asante Sana!